

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 534

CS 511 994

TITLE Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Character. [Lesson Plan].

SPONS AGENCY Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.; MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NEAH), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 2002-08-20

NOTE 12p.; See CS 511 993 for a related lesson plan.

AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_index.asp.

PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Characterization; *Childrens Literature; Class Activities; *Cultural Context; Elementary Education; *Fairy Tales; Folk Culture; *Language Arts; Learning Activities; Lesson Plans; Skill Development; Student Educational Objectives; Units of Study

IDENTIFIERS *Cinderella; Standards for the English Language Arts

ABSTRACT

Something about the Cinderella story resonates with its audience. Related tales are told in cultures all over the globe--500 versions of the tale have been found in Europe alone. In America too, the classic tale, re-envisioned in print and other media, continues to be popular. What changes does the Cinderella story undergo when it is translated from one culture to another: Why do people love the character of Cinderella so much more than her own stepmother does? This lesson plan for a unit on Cinderella's character intended for children in grades 3-5: cites subject areas, time required, and skills developed; provides an introduction; presents learning objectives; poses a guiding question; gives tips for teachers preparing to teach the lesson; suggests (and delineates) three classroom activities; provides suggestions for extending the lesson; lists Web resources; addresses standards alignment; and offers charts for characters in Cinderella and for characters in Cinderella stories from around the world. (NKA)

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CS 511 994

Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Character

Introduction

Perhaps it's because each of us feels like the poor, downtrodden sibling at times. But whatever the reason, something about the Cinderella story resonates with its audience. Five hundred versions of the tale have been found in Europe alone; related tales are told in cultures all over the globe. In America as well, the classic tale, re-envisioned in print and other media, continues to be popular. What changes does the Cinderella story undergo when it's translated from one culture to another? What remains the same? Why do we love the character of Cinderella so much more than her own stepmother does?

NOTE: This lesson may be taught either as a stand-alone lesson or as a sequel to the complementary EDSITEMent lesson *Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Plot and Setting*, which concentrates on variability of plot and setting among Cinderella tales.

Guiding Question:

How does a folk tale change when translated to another culture?

Learning Objectives

After completing the lessons in this plan, students will be able to:

- Discuss differences in the characteristics of the heroine (e.g., meek, assertive) in a variety of Cinderella tales
- Explain and compare common characteristics of character, plot, and conflict resolution among variations of the Cinderella story
- Name countries in which Cinderella variations are found
- Define the essential qualities of a Cinderella tale and cite specific examples for support from at least two variations

Preparing to Teach this Lesson

- Review the lesson plan. Locate and bookmark suggested materials and other useful websites. Download and print out documents you will use and duplicate copies as necessary for student viewing.
- Download the blackline masters "Chart for Characters in Cinderella", and "Characters in Cinderella Stories from Around the World" for this lesson, available here as a PDF file. Print out and make an appropriate number of copies of any handouts you plan to use in class.
- Prepare as a handout—or for computer viewing—the illustrations *Cinderella Fitting the Slipper* and *Putting the Slipper to Her Foot* so as to obscure any mention of Cinderella. Both images are available on *Cinderella Bibliography*, a link from the EDSITEMent resource *The History of Education and Childhood*.
- The Cinderella story can be found in many countries and in many cultures. Students will see dramatic evidence of that in this lesson; however, rather than concentrating on cultural differences between the stories, this lesson concentrates on identifying commonalities and differences in character. Help students understand the universal appeal of the Cinderella story.



GRADES 3-5



Image courtesy of The Cinderella Project,
Michael N. Salda, editor
The de Grummond Children's
Literature Research Collection,
University of Southern Mississippi

Subject Areas

Art and Culture

Folklore

Foreign Language

Other

Literature and Language Arts

Fiction

World

Time Required

Two class periods, plus additional time as needed to prepare and view performances of tales

Skills

Creative writing
Literary analysis
Collaboration
Performance skills

Additional Data

Date Created: 08/20/02

- The reading level of each of the stories suggested throughout this lesson is about the same, with a standard fairy tale vocabulary and perhaps--depending on the country of origin--a few unique words relating to that country (such as "lassie" replacing "girl" and other Scottish touches in *Rashin-Coatie*, which contains the most idioms related to its country of origin). Check to see if the reading level is appropriate for your class.
- Some classes would benefit from hearing in advance the stories to be assigned in Activity 2. Consider reading them aloud during your usual story time in the days before you begin this lesson. The central activity is analysis, so it's fine for students to hear the story ahead of time.
- Page lengths--based on downloading the story in a 12-point font--are provided as an aid to assigning stories; however, your length may vary based on such variables as formatting and font. One of the options offered for group assignment in Activity 2, below, is David Delamare's retelling of *Cinderella*, published in 1993 by Green Tiger Press, Simon & Schuster, which is richly illustrated and written in completely contemporary language (but not simplified), available via a link from the EDSITEMent-reviewed website Internet Public Library. Note that the format for this story requires clicking on each thumbnail for a larger image. Illustration thumbnails face a text page as in the original.
- The following background information on Cinderella tales comes from an essay by Mary Northrup entitled *Multicultural Cinderella Stories*, available on the website of the American Library Association, a link from the EDSITEMent resource Internet Public Library.

The story of Cinderella, perhaps the best-known fairy tale, is told or read to children of very young ages. But Cinderella is not just one story; more than 500 versions have been found--just in Europe! The tale's origins appear to date back to a Chinese story from the ninth century, "Yeh-Shen." Almost every culture seems to have its own version, and every storyteller his or her tale. Charles Perrault is believed to be the author, in the 1690s, of our "modern" 300-year-old Cinderella, the French Cendrillon.

Famous children's writers and illustrators have interpreted Cinderella, including Arthur Rackham, Marcia Brown (her version won the Caldecott Medal in 1955), Nonny Hogrogian, Paul Galdone, and Amy Ehrlich. Most renderings of the story include an evil stepmother and stepsister(s), a dead mother, a dead or ineffective father, some sort of gathering such as a ball or festival, mutual attraction with a person of high status, a lost article, and a search that ends with success.

Male Cinderellas do appear, and not just in parodies, such as Helen Ketteman's "Bubba the Cowboy Prince" and Sandi Takayama's "Sumorella" ... "Billy Beg" of Ireland is just one of many of these versions of the story.

Cinderella, despite her popularity, has developed a reputation as a simpering, whimpering girl who is helpless until the right magic comes along. But this is the Cinderella of the later twentieth century. The earlier Cinderella, in many of her original forms, was not a wishing-only kind of person. She was self-reliant, devoted to family and ancestors, and willing to make her own future.

- Experts categorize fairy tales according to a system named after two scholars, Aarne and Thompson. Cinderella's variations are so abundant that the tale received its own category--folktale type 510, related stories of persecuted heroines. Here are notes on some of the specific variations from the *Cinderella Bibliography*, a link from the EDSITEMent-reviewed website *The History of Education and Childhood*.

Types most frequently in Cinderella stories are 510: *Cinderella and Cap o' Rushes*, which includes such functions as the persecuted heroine, magic help, meeting the prince, overstay at the ball, proof of identity such as the slipper test, a ring, or unique abilities such as that of plucking the gold apple, marriage to the prince, and the value of salt. 510A: *Cinderella*, the stepsisters, the missing mother who helps by means of animals. 510B: The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and of the Stars, where the father would marry his daughter; three fold visit to the church, identifying footwear.

- Reader's Theater, used to dramatize texts of many kinds, is a staged reading with a minimum of the trappings of theater. Scripts are used during the performance; familiarity with the script rather than memorization is all that is required. Costumes are not used. Movement is minimal or non-existent. Roles are assigned, including one or more narrators. Narration, especially useful with texts not written for the theater, bridges gaps in the dialogue.

Because students generally enjoy such low-pressure performance, Reader's Theater stimulates interest in the text under consideration. Here, performance is suggested to enhance understanding and to emphasize the changes in character from the familiar Cinderella.

- No Cinderella stories, except the Perrault version, are repeated in both of the companion EDSITEment lessons *Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Character* and *Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Plot and Setting*. Any of the stories could be used in either lesson; feel free to interchange them as desired.

Suggested Activities

1. Cinderella's Character Traits

2. Cinderella Variations

3. Cinderella Reader's Theater

1. Cinderella's Character Traits

If you did not use the companion EDSITEment lesson *Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Plot and Setting* as a prequel, begin by showing the class *Cinderella Fitting the Slipper*, a Cinderella illustration from *Cinderella Bibliography*, a link from the EDSITEment resource *The History of Education and Childhood*. Ask students if they can identify the story from the picture. Most will know immediately. How is it that virtually everyone can identify that this illustration is from Cinderella? Ask students, "What about this illustration makes the story identifiable?" What's happening at this point in the plot of the story? (Define the term "plot" for students, if necessary.) Again, everyone probably knows.

If you previously used the companion EDSITEment lesson *Cinderella Folk Tales: Variations in Plot and Setting*, refresh students' memory of *Cinderella Fitting the Slipper*, a Cinderella illustration from *Cinderella Bibliography*, a link from the EDSITEment-reviewed website *The History of Education and Childhood* and then continue the lesson from here. Show the class *Putting the Slipper to Her Foot*, another illustration from a different version of the story, also available on *Cinderella Bibliography*. Do students recognize the story from this picture once again?

Challenge students to look closely and compare both pictures. There are distinctions in character traits between them. For example, in *Putting the Slipper to Her Foot*, the Prince looks more subservient to Cinderella. What might have happened differently in this version of the story? Let students hypothesize. There are many versions of Cinderella from all over the world (some of which students will read as part of this lesson) and differences in the nature of the characters within those various tales. And, because the characters are somewhat different, the stories tend to be a little (or a lot) different.

What characters and respective character traits from the Cinderella tale with which they are familiar can students list? Brainstorm as a class and write down what students say. Do they recall where the character elements they've listed come from? Ask students, "What did you read or see that makes you connect this character trait with this character?" (For them, perhaps the Disney animated feature or read-alouds from earlier grades.)

Read aloud to the class the text-only Perrault version of the Cinderella tale on *Folklore and Mythology*, a link from the EDSITEment resource *Learner.org*, or, even better, any of the many illustrated print versions, one of which you probably have in your school library. While you are there, check in your library for other variants used in this lesson. The Perrault version is the source of the most familiar Cinderella tale.

Which character elements that the students mentioned previously were in this version? As shown by what in the story? Which were not?

Using input from the class, fill in the "Chart for Characters in Cinderella," on page 1 of the PDF file (see Preparing to Teach This Lesson, above, for download instructions), to model what students will eventually be doing on their own.

If you are going to adapt it, prepare the chart "Characters in Cinderella Stories from Around the World," (see Preparing to Teach This Lesson, above, for download instructions), for use in the next activity based on student input collected during this activity.

2. Cinderella Variations

For this activity, students will read stories that experts have categorized as Cinderella variants. The goal is to help students see that there will be variability in the character traits of the main characters, though many of the same plot elements will be present in the narrative. For example, in the Italian Cinderella, available via a link from the EDSITEMent-reviewed website Learner.org, the heroine is very demanding and sure of herself, yet we still recognize her as a Cinderella.

Begin by modeling this process with the class, using the Italian Cinderella (Italy, 5 1/2 pages). Before you share the story, remind students of the characters and character traits in the familiar Cinderella, as you listed in Activity 1. Ask students, "In what way do you predict that the character traits of Cinderella, for example, could change?"

Read aloud the Italian Cinderella. Using the chart "Characters in Cinderella Stories from Around the World," available in PDF format (see Preparing to Teach This Lesson, above, for download instructions) or your own adaptation, help students identify character variations in the Italian version. Ask students, "What essential elements of the plot are accomplished—though differently—due to differences in character?" (for example, the Italian Cinderella does have a magical helper—like a fairy godmother—in the form of the bird, Verdelio, but she secures the bird herself.)

Now, small groups should be ready to analyze a Cinderella tale on their own. As you prepare to assign the stories, let students know that in some of these stories, the characters will be closer to the original than in others. Point out to students the different countries of origin for these variants, though that is not the focus of the assignment. Interested students are encouraged to do research on a country as desired (see the fourth bullet point under Extending the Lesson, below).

Stories for Group Assignment:

- From Folklore and Mythology: Electronic Texts, a link from the EDSITEMent resource Learner.org:
 - The Story of Tam and Cam (Vietnam, 5 pages)
 - The Green Knight (Denmark, 8 pages)
 - Katie Woodencloak (Norway, 9 pages, from Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe)
 - Pepelyouga (Serbia, 3 pages)
 - Rashin-Coatie (Scotland, 2 pages)
- From West Chester University LIT 395 and ENG 592, a link from the EDSITEMent-reviewed website Learner.org:
 - The Golden Slipper (Russia, 2 pages)
- From Cinderella Project, available via a link from the EDSITEMent resource Internet Public Library:
 - David Delamare's retelling of Cinderella (United States, 19 pages of text, published in 1993 by Green Tiger Press, Simon & Schuster; NOTE: The online format of this story requires clicking on each thumbnail for a larger image.)

Each group should present to the class a plot summary and a brief explanation of the character changes and

commonalities. Create a class list of the variety of character traits in the various heroines.

3. Cinderella Reader's Theater

Because the class has focused on character traits in this lesson, dramatizing the stories will help students experience the differences as fellow students bring the traits to life. Student groups should work up staged readings of their assigned tale using the Reader's Theater technique or through a dramatic reenactment.

Extending the Lesson

- Students can search for other Cinderella tales through links from the EDSITEment resource Internet Public Library. An extensive database may be found at Cinderella: Variations and Multicultural Versions on the Cinderella Project, and an annotated bibliography of current Cinderella picture books is available from the American Library Association.
- Students can explore other fairy tales and their variants, starting with projects about Little Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk, extensions of the Cinderella Project, available through The KidReach Reading Center, a link from the EDSITEment-reviewed website Internet Public Library.
- Citing concerns about alcohol use, an illustrated edition of "Little Red Riding Hood" was banned in two California school districts in 1989 because it depicted our heroine taking food and wine to her grandmother. Such banning occurs with surprising frequency. Debates over the appropriateness of fairy tales—for a variety of reasons—are nothing new. The EDSITEment resource The History of Education and Childhood features Dr. Karl Oppel's 1903 essay, Should children be told fairy tales?, which might interest (and even infuriate) some students. Here are a few excerpts:

...are they recommendable for youth? I know, that I with my opinion will contradict thousands of fathers and educators, but yet I for myself answer this question with a very decided *No*. Many fairy tales fill the imagination with horrible images, with terrifying figures and by this they lay the foundation of scare and fear... Is it a wonder, if the child does not want to stay alone in the dark? ...I am of the opinion, that one should *never* tell children any extranatural (or, as many would have it) supernatural thing, no miracle stories, no fairy tales, nothing of fairies and ghosts; most of all one should not think, that a child, when told it is just a *fairy tale*, would not believe it for that reason. Far from it. Little children believe everything, because they do not think yet, and it does not matter much, whether one says with it: "It's true," or "It's *not* true".

Discuss Dr. Oppel's opinions in class. Do students agree or disagree? Why?

- Students can complete research on any of the countries represented by Cinderella variations in this lesson. Our World, available on the EDSITEment-reviewed website Internet Public Library, is a good place to start online research on countries. Can students make connections between the information they find about a country's culture and that country's particular version of the Cinderella story?
- Interested students can read The Annotated Cinderella, an annotated copy of the Perrault version of the tale, available via a link from EDSITEment resource Learner.org, which explains many of the characteristic elements of the story. (NOTE: This page loads very slowly.)
- Students can locate online versions of Cinderella stories in their original language, including the Norwegian original of Katie Woodencloak—Kari Trestakk—available via a link from the EDSITEment-reviewed website Learner.org, and the German original of Aschenputtel, available through the EDSITEment resource Internet Public Library.

Selected EDSITEment Websites

- The History of Education and Childhood
[<http://www.socsci.kun.nl/ped/whp/histeduc/index.html>]
 - Dr. Karl Oppel's argument against fairy tales
[<http://www.socsci.kun.nl/ped/whp/histeduc/disc01.html>]
 - Camelot Project
[<http://www.lib.rochester.edu:80/camelot/CPHOME.stm>]

- Cap O'Rushes
[<http://www.lib.rochester.edu:80/camelot/cinder/images/JACOBS1.htm>]
- Cinderella Bibliography
[<http://www.lib.rochester.edu:80/camelot/cinder/cinintr.htm>]
- Fair Brown and Trembling
[<http://www.lib.rochester.edu:80/camelot/cinder/images/JACOBS4.htm>]
- Putting the Slipper on Her Foot
[<http://www.lib.rochester.edu:80/camelot/cinder/images/Clarke1.htm>]
- The Internet Public Library [<http://www.ipl.org>]
 - Our World
[<http://www.ipl.org/kidspace/browse/owd0000>]
 - 19th Century German Stories
[<http://www.fln.vcu.edu/menu.html>]
 - American Library Association [<http://www.ala.org/>]
 - Multi-Cultural Cinderella Stories
[<http://www.ala.org/BookLinks/v09/cinderella.html>]
 - Tattercoats
[<http://www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/ttc.html>]
 - The Princess and the Golden Shoes
[<http://www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/ptgs.html>]
 - The KidReach Reading Center
[<http://www.westga.edu/%7Ekidreach/index.html>]
 - Cinderella Project: Home Page
[<http://www-dept.usm.edu/%7eengdept/cinderella/cinderella.html>]
de Grummond Children's Literature Research Collection,
University of Southern Mississippi, editor, Michael N. Salda
 - Perrault's Histories London: J. Pote & R. Montagu, 1729
[<http://www-dept.usm.edu/%7eengdept/cinderella/cind5.html>]
 - David Delamare's retelling of Cinderella,
published in 1993 by Green Tiger Press, Simon & Schuster
[<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~engdept/cinderella/delamare/thumbs.html>]
 - de Grummond Children's Literature Research Collection Cinderella:
Variations and Multicultural Versions
[<http://avatar.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/html/collectionhl/ch-cinderelladatabase.shtml>]
- Learner.org [<http://www.learner.org/>]
 - Cinderella: A Cross-Textual Study
[<http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/conversations/conversation/objectifying/extension.html>]
 - The Annotated Cinderella
[<http://members.aol.com/surlalune/frytales/cinderel/index.htm>]
 - West Chester University LIT 395 and ENG 592
[<http://courses.wcupa.edu/johnson/>]
 - Cap O'Rushes
[<http://courses.wcupa.edu/johnson/cap1.htm>]
 - The Golden Slipper (Russian)
[<http://courses.wcupa.edu/johnson/golden.html>]
 - Tattercoats [<http://courses.wcupa.edu/johnson/tatt1.htm>]
 - Folklore and Mythology: Electronic Texts
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>]
 - Cinderella [<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html>]
 - The Wicked Stepmother

- [<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html#india>]
- o The Story of Tam and Cam
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/tam.html>]
- o The Green Knight
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/greenknight.html>]
- o Katie Woodencloak
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html#woodencloak>]
- o Pepelyouga
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html#Serbia>]
- o Rashin-Coatie
[<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0510a.html#rashincoatie>]
- Native Web [<http://www.nativeweb.org/>]
 - o Mi'kmaq Cinderella
[<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/stories/cinder3.html>]

Other Information

Standards Alignment

1. ACTFL-4.2

Demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and one's own more

2. NAES-Theater(5-8) 3

Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes

3. NAES-Theater(5-8) 4

Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes

4. NAES-Theater(5-8) 5

Researching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes

5. NCTE/IRA-1

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. more

6. NCTE/IRA-11

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

7. NCTE/IRA-3

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. more

8. NCTE/IRA-6

Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. [more](#)



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Chart for Characters in Cinderella

Character	Circle one or more adjectives that apply to the character. Add any other adjectives that fit.	What in the story shows how the adjective(s) you chose apply to the character?
Heroine/Hero (Cinderella)	strong, sugar-sweet, meek, persecuted, happy (despite terrible conditions), sad, obedient, independent, beautiful and kind, revengeful, dependent, foolish, wise	
Major tormentor (Wicked Stepmother)	mean, ambitious, pleasant, ugly, beautiful, unthinking	
Person with mixed loyalty (Father)	weak, kind, mean, dependent, foolish, uninterested	
Minor tormenter(s) (Stepsisters)	mean, conceited, ugly, beautiful, ambitious	
Rescuer (Prince)	handsome, foolish, kind, obedient, independent, dependent, conceited	
Helper(s) (Fairy Godmother)	cute, brave, emotionless, kind, obedient, independent, revengeful, helpful, foolish	
Other: _____		

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Characters in Cinderella Stories from Around the World

Name(s): _____		Date _____	
What kind of _____ in your story?	Which character in your story?	Circle one or more adjectives that apply to the character. Add other adjectives that fit.	What in the story shows how the adjective(s) you chose apply to the character?
Heroine/Hero (Cinderella)		strong, sugar-sweet, meek, tormented, happy (despite terrible conditions), sad, obedient, independent, beautiful and kind, revengeful, dependent, foolish, wise	
Major tormentor (Wicked Stepmother)		mean, ambitious, pleasant, ugly, beautiful, unthinking	
Person with mixed loyalty (Father)		weak, kind, mean, dependent, foolish, uninterested	
Minor tormenter(s) (Stepsisters)		mean, conceited, ugly, beautiful, ambitious	
Rescuer (Prince)		handsome, foolish, kind, obedient, independent, dependent, conceited	
Helper(s) (Fairy Godmother)		cute, brave, emotionless, kind, obedient, independent, revengeful, helpful, foolish	
Other: _____			

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